



How Readership, Timing and Social Shares Affect SEO and Earned Media Value





1

Most Enterprise Tech articles are shared infrequently through social channels – about 275 of the 419 articles we looked at received eight or less social shares, and tactics that boost social shares for earned media may provide an opportunity for differentiation.

2

Contrary to popular belief, when it comes to the volume of social shares that an article typically receives, it may not matter what day of the week the article posts.

3

While you'd think that articles in publications with huge circulations would get a lot more social shares, that is not the case. We saw an increase of less than one social share per every additional 10,000 readers a publication has.

4

While the impact of social presence on SEO is still a bit of a mystery, we do see a correlation between the number of social shares an article receives and search engine ranking – social shares, in very high volumes, may boost SEO impact.

Introduction

In marketing, a media placement is considered “earned” when it is the result of an editor or journalist including a company in an article, and stands in contrast to paid media, such as advertisements, advertorials, etc. It is well established that earned media provides more credibility than advertising and is much more influential in purchasing decisions (Lynch, 2018). However, determining its value has been somewhat difficult, because many of the metrics used in advertising, such as clickthrough rates, are not applicable and don't indicate the effect an article has on the target audience.

The goal of this report is to discover correlations and patterns that might be helpful in predicting and influencing the kind of impact that an article will have. Two specific areas that are generally agreed upon to be representative of the true value of earned media are social media shares and SEO impact. This report explores how several common metrics for evaluating earned media may influence social sharing and SEO, and we hope this will help the reader shape best practices for maximizing these elements and gaining the most value from earned media placements.



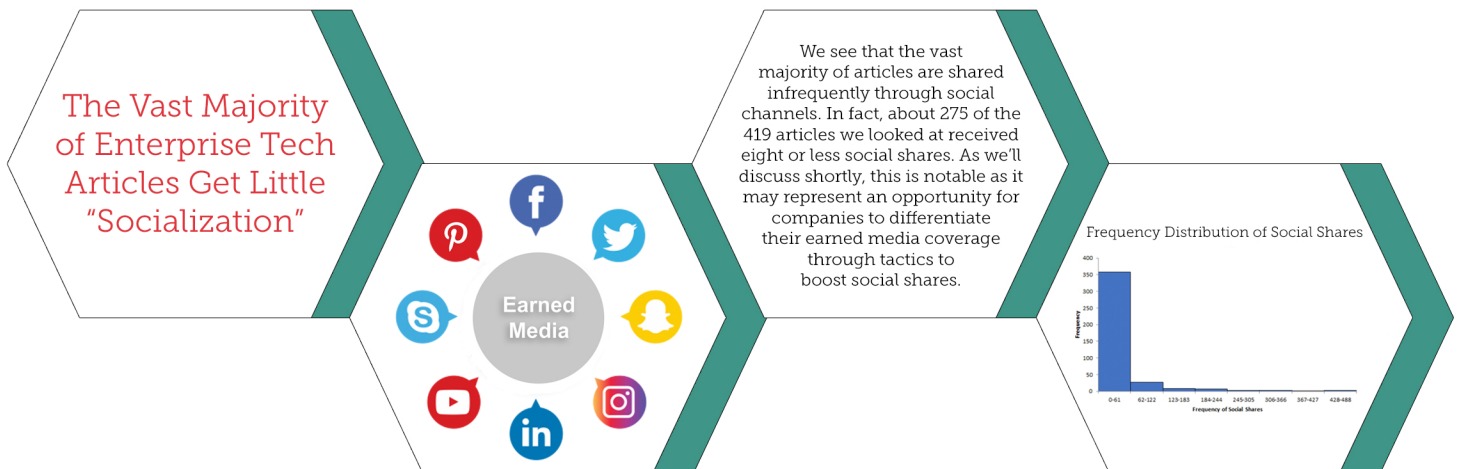
We have leveraged data on more than 400 articles from the media monitoring platform TrendKite, which provides a rich variety of metrics on earned media, such as readership, social shares, and SEO impact through a standard known as the MOZ score (Lustig, 2015). Since there is great variance in the readership behaviors seen in various types of media (people read consumer publications for entirely different reasons than business publications and display very different habits), we narrowed the focus to earned media coverage within enterprise technology for this report, examining data on articles mentioning about twenty different companies in the data management industry. (None of our findings, therefore, are predictive of consumer earned media or other industries.)



For the study, we asked the following questions:

- 1) What is the effect of timing on social shares?
- 2) What is the effect readership size on social shares?
- 3) Does the number of social shares that an article receives influence its SEO impact?

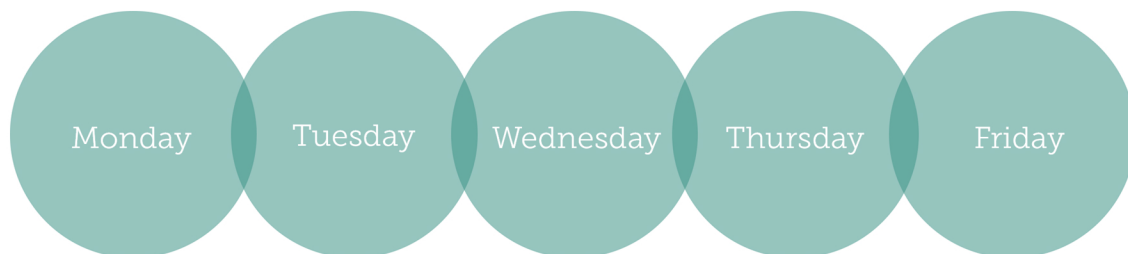
Our purpose was to explore some basic tactics that are commonly thought to contribute to the value that earned media has for a brand in terms of SEO impact and social shares. We also aimed to determine the connection between social shares and SEO impact. Such tactics often include targeting outlets with larger readership and seeking publication on Monday through Wednesday, as conventional wisdom within the industry holds that these are more effective days. In some cases the data supported conventional PR wisdom, but not in all cases.



Day of the Week May Not Matter

In terms of the impact of timing, we were surprised to find that there doesn't appear to be any indication that it's preferable to post an article on any particular week day. While we did detect some difference in the average number of social shares by day of week, with Monday and Friday being slightly higher than the other days of the week, the difference wasn't statistically significant.

So if the objective is to maximize social shares for an article, it may not matter which day of the week it runs. (Note: we excluded weekend postings from the data as a relatively small number of enterprise tech articles post on weekends.)

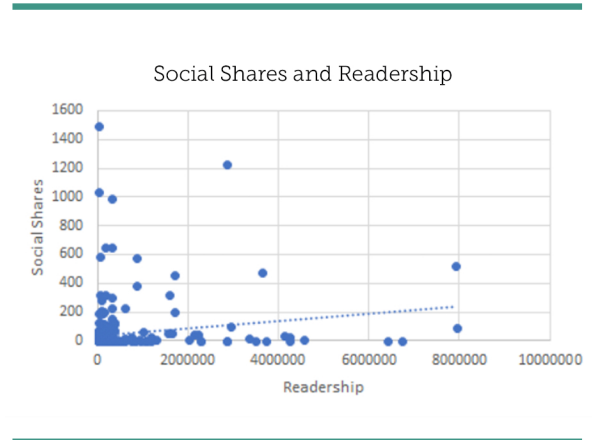




The Influence of Readership Size on Social Shares is Much Smaller Than You Might Think

Looking at the impact of readership, there does appear to be a correlation between publication size and the number of social shares. This tends to conform with conventional wisdom that the more people reading a publication on average, the more they'll share through social channels. What is surprising is that the correlation is much weaker than we anticipated. As the following chart indicates, we're seeing an increase of less than one social share per every additional 10,000 readers that a publication has.

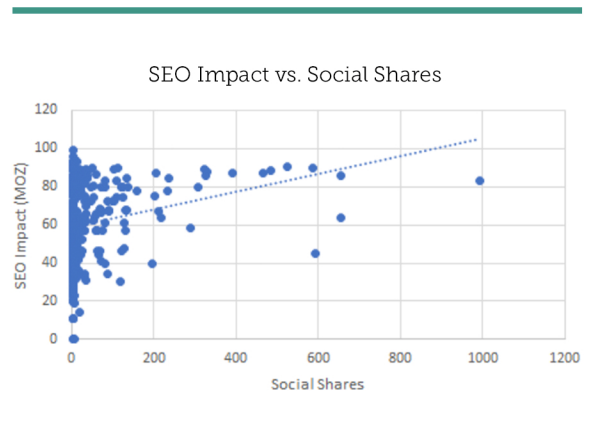
In short, very large increases in readership may be required to produce noticeable increases in social shares. So while this may be a factor in choosing between targeting a large international outlet such as The New York Times, or a small trade publication, it wouldn't be a factor in selecting between two publications that have readerships that are within a few hundred thousand of each other.



Social Shares, in Very High Volumes, May Boost SEO Impact

Finally, we looked at the relationship between social shares and SEO impact. Here, though we found that the correlation wasn't particularly strong, the relationship between increasing the number of social shares and SEO impact was high enough to, in some instances, make it a tactic worth pursuing. We found that, on average, an additional 100 social shares could boost the Trendkite Social Impact score by 3 to 7 points (on a 0-100 scale).

Such an increase might influence a page ranking on a Google search enough to be worth the effort or money required to generate 100 shares, and could mean the difference in being ranked above or below a competitor. This is of course a best case scenario, but nevertheless, it is worth considering. And, going back to our finding that the vast majority of articles for enterprise tech receive eight or fewer shares, this could present an opportunity for companies to differentiate themselves—chances are, their competitors are not putting much effort into social share boosting.





Limits of the Study

Finally, we should note that this is an observational study, and while we have reason to believe that the correlations that we've found are the result of direct influence, we acknowledge that correlation does not always mean causation. For example, while it appears that the number of social shares are contributing to higher SEO Impact scores, it could very well be that another yet-to-be observed factor is actually driving up both of them. Therefore further studies will be required to more conclusively confirm these kinds of findings.

References

- Lynch, C. (15 March, 2018). As Advertising Changes, Earned Media Offers Marketers Untapped Opportunity. MarTech Advisor. Retrieved from: <https://www.martechadvisor.com/articles/ads/as-advertising-changes-earned-media-offers-marketers-untapped-opportunity/>
- Lustrig, B. (7 January, 2015). Review: Trendkite Aims to Lift PR Measurement and Reporting ROI. DMN. Retrieved from: <http://www.dmnews.com/marketing-strategy/review-trendkite-aims-to-lift-pr-measurement-and-reporting-roi/article/391341/>